UMMUL MOMINEEN

MAIMUNA

BINT AL HARITH AL HILALIYYA

ميمونه بِنت الحارث ٱلْهِلَالِيَّة رضئ الله تعالى عنها

SHAIKH MIR ASEDULLAH QUADRI

UMMUL MOMINEEN MAIMUNA BINT AL-HARITH AL-HILALIYYA

(رضئ الله تعالى عنہا)

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الحمد لله رب العالمين، والصلاة والسلام
على سيدنا محمد وعلى آله وصحبه أجمعين

UMMUL MOMINEEN MAIMUNAH BINT AL-HARITH AL-HILALIYA (رضئ الله تعالى عنہا)

BIRTH AND EARLY LIFE

Maimunah bint al-Ḥarith ibn Ḥazn al-Hilaliyyah (رضئ الله تعالى عنہا) was born in Hijaz during the closing decades of sixth century CE, into a respected Arab household known for its generosity, nobility, and kinship to the Quraish. She belonged to the tribe of Banu Hilal, one of the notable Arab tribes that traced its lineage through the larger Mudarite confederation.

Maimunah (رضئ الله تعالى عنہا) was born into a family of powerful social connections. Through her mother, Hind bint Awf, she was part of an extraordinary web of female kinship that included some of the most distinguished women of the Quraish. Among her maternal sisters were Lubabah al-Kubra (Umm al-Fadl), the wife of Abbas ibn Abd al-Muṭṭalib (رضئ الله تعالى عنه); Lubabah al-Ṣughra, who was married to Walid ibn al-Mughirah and thus the mother of Khalid ibn al-Walid (رضئ الله تعالى عنه); and Asma bint Umays, who would go on to marry Jafar ibn Abu Ṭalib (رضئ الله تعالى عنه), and later Abu Bakr As-Ṣiddiq (رضئ الله تعالى عنه). Due to this remarkable network, the household in which Maimunah was raised was one of deep familiarity with the Quraish elite and, eventually, with the early Muslim leadership.

She was originally named Barrah, considering its meaning to be “the dutiful” or “righteous,” but the Prophet (صلى الله عليه و آله وسلم) would later change her name to Maimunah, which means

“blessed” or “fortunate.” The renaming was in line with the Prophet’s (صلى الله عليه و آله وسلم) practice of altering names that implied excessive self-righteousness or misfortune, and it came to symbolize her elevated status and the auspiciousness of her marriage.

Details of her early upbringing are scant, but what is evident from later reports is that she carried herself with the dignity of a noblewoman—poised, intelligent, and aware of her place in society. She grew up in the pre-Islamic milieu of tribal Arabia, surrounded by the customary practices of lineage pride, hospitality, and honor. Like many women of her time, her early adult life included marriage. She was widowed twice, first from Mas’ud ibn Amr al-Thaqafi, and then from Abu Rahm ibn Abd al-Uzza al-Amiri, both men from prominent tribes. Her second husband died while she was in Makkah, leaving her without a protector but still highly respected due to her familial connections.

By the time Islam had begun to gain firm ground in Madinah and had entered into diplomatic and social negotiations with the Quraish, Maimunah (رضئ الله تعالى عنہا) found herself at a turning point—no longer a young bride, but a mature woman of piety, insight, and noble character, who would soon be chosen for a unique and blessed destiny.

Her introduction into the life of the Prophet Muhammad (صلى الله عليه و آله وسلم) would not only transform her personal life but also serve as a political and spiritual bridge between Islam and the Quraish at a critical historical moment. She was about to become part of the most sacred household in Islamic history—not through war or alliance, but through faith, virtue, and divine decree.

LIFE BEFORE MARRIAGE TO THE PROPHET (صلى الله عليه و آله وسلم)

Before her marriage with the Apostle of Allah (صلى الله عليه و آله وسلم), Maimunah bint al-Ḥarith (رضئ الله تعالى عنہا) lived a life that reflected both the complexities and resilience of noble Arab women in pre-Islamic society. Having been twice married and twice widowed, she experienced firsthand the instability and vulnerability that often-followed widowhood in an honor-based, patriarchal culture. Yet despite the potential precariousness of her position, Maimunah (رضئ الله تعالى عنہا) was far from marginalized. Her familial network and personal integrity preserved her standing in society, even as she quietly longed for something more lasting and more sacred.

She was known to be devout in temperament, and it is said that she had already felt a spiritual inclination toward the message of Islam even before the Muslims re-entered Makkah for Umrat al-Qaḍa. Though not yet formally a Muslim, she was in close proximity to the message through her sisters and their husbands, many of whom had embraced Islam early.

Her half-sister Umm al-Faḍl Lubabah (رضئ الله تعالى عنہا) had already accepted Islam and was married to Abbas ibn Abd al-Muṭṭalib (رضئ الله تعالى عنه), the Prophet’s (صلى الله عليه و آله وسلم) paternal uncle.

Maimunah (رضئ الله تعالى عنہا) was also connected by blood to Asma bint Umays, another early Muslim and wife of Jafar ibn Abu Ṭalib (رضئ الله تعالى عنه). These women were not merely believers in private; they were active supporters of the Prophet (صلى الله عليه و آله وسلم), and their proximity to Maimunah (رضئ الله تعالى عنہا) brought her into frequent contact with the teachings and character of Islam.

When the Prophet (صلى الله عليه و آله وسلم) and his Companions were finally allowed to enter Makkah in the seventh year after Hijrah under the terms of the Treaty of Ḥudaybiyyah, they came for the purpose of completing the Umrat al-Qaḍa that had been deferred the previous year. It was during this visit that Abbas ibn Abd al-Muṭṭalib (رضئ الله تعالى عنه), seeing the Prophet (صلى الله عليه و آله وسلم) now free to enter Makkah, proposed a marriage that would further solidify relations between the Prophet (صلى الله عليه و آله وسلم) and his noble Makkan kin: the marriage of his widowed sister-in-law, Maimunah, to the Apostle of Allah (صلى الله عليه و آله وسلم).

According to authentic reports in Sahih al-Bukhari, Abbas not only suggested the marriage but also acted as her guardian in facilitating it. The Prophet (صلى الله عليه و آله وسلم) agreed to the proposal, and the marriage contract was concluded while the Muslims were camped at a place called Sarif, just outside Makkah, on their return from Umrah. It was here, only a few miles from the city that had expelled him years earlier, that the Prophet (صلى الله عليه و آله وسلم) married the woman who would become his final wife.

What makes this moment especially significant is that Maimunah (رضئ الله تعالى عنہا) formally embraced Islam at the time of this marriage, thus entering not only the Prophet's (صلى الله عليه و آله وسلم) household but also the fold of the believers in full conviction and grace. She was not chosen for her youth or wealth, but for her noble character, her sincerity, and her kinship to a wider Quraishi network that was slowly opening its heart to the message of Islam.

Thus, her life before marriage, marked by noble origins, personal losses, and quiet piety, was a prelude to a final and blessed union—one that would bring her into the most honored household on earth, and grant her the timeless title of Mother of the Believers.

MARRIAGE TO THE PROPHET (صلى الله عليه و آله وسلم)

The marriage of Maimunah bint al-Ḥarith (رضئ الله تعالى عنہا) to Prophet Muhammad (صلى الله عليه و آله وسلم) was not only a personal union of spiritual beauty and trust, but also a moment of profound symbolic importance in the early trajectory of Islam. It occurred at a time when diplomacy, kinship, and the prophetic mission were converging to secure a more stable and peaceful foundation for the Muslim community.

The year was 7 AH (629 CE), and the Muslims were returning to Makkah to perform the previously deferred Umrat al-Qaḍa, under the terms of the Treaty of Ḥudaybiyyah. This marked the first time the Prophet (صلى الله عليه و آله وسلم) and his Companions had reentered the sacred sanctuary since the Hijrah. Their arrival was highly symbolic: a demonstration of strength, restraint, and the fulfillment of a divine promise.

It was during this journey that Abbas ibn Abd al-Muṭṭalib (رضئ الله تعالى عنه)—the Prophet's (صلى الله عليه و آله وسلم) paternal uncle and a recent Muslim convert—approached the Apostle of Allah (صلى الله عليه و آله وسلم) with a proposal that was both familial and strategic. His sister-in-law, Maimunah (رضئ الله تعالى عنها), had been widowed and was now without a protector. She was known for her piety and noble lineage, and her affinity for Islam had already taken root. Abbas suggested that the Prophet (صلى الله عليه و آله وسلم) marry her, thereby strengthening the bond between him and one of the oldest and most respected Quraishi families.

The Prophet (صلى الله عليه و آله وسلم) accepted the proposal. The marriage contract was drawn up and concluded at a place called Sarif, a valley located approximately ten miles outside of Makkah, as the Muslims prepared to return to Madinah after completing Umrah. This was the same place where Maimunah (رضئ الله تعالى عنها) would eventually be buried decades later, making her resting place eternally linked to the site of her blessed union with the Prophet (صلى الله عليه و آله وسلم).

At the time of the marriage, Maimunah (رضئ الله تعالى عنها) formally embraced Islam. Though inclined toward the religion before, it was through this union that she openly joined the ranks of believers and entered into the sacred company of the Mothers of the Believers. In a narration found in Sahih al-Bukhari, it is reported that the Prophet (صلى الله عليه و آله وسلم) changed her name from Barrah to Maimunah, saying that her name should not suggest self-righteousness. The new name—meaning "blessed" or "fortunate"—was apt, as the marriage was seen as a source of great barakah (divine blessing).

Through this marriage, the Prophet (صلى الله عليه و آله وسلم) demonstrated yet again the value Islam places on piety and personal virtue over worldly attributes. Furthermore, her marriage served to strengthen the Prophet's (صلى الله عليه و آله وسلم) ties with the Hilali and Quraishi clans, easing tensions and opening hearts that had long resisted his call.

Her entrance into the household of the Prophet (صلى الله عليه و آله وسلم) marked the final marriage he would contract in his lifetime. With her, the number of his wives reached the divinely ordained limit. From this point onward, no other woman would be married to him, and Maimunah (رضئ الله تعالى عنها) would forever be remembered as the last woman to marry the Prophet (صلى الله عليه و آله وسلم).

LIFE AS WIFE OF THE PROPHET (صلى الله عليه و آله وسلم)

After her marriage to Prophet Muhammad (صلى الله عليه و آله وسلم) at Sarif, Maimunah bint al-Ḥarith (رضئ الله تعالى عنہا) took her place among the Mothers of the Believers, the select group of women who shared in the life, mission, and household of the Final Apostle of Allah (صلى الله عليه و آله وسلم). Though she entered this sacred circle later than most—being the last woman to marry the Prophet (صلى الله عليه و آله وسلم)—her presence was neither marginal nor unnoticed. Rather, she brought to the Prophet's (صلى الله عليه و آله وسلم) household a maturity, serenity, and noble character that were entirely consistent with the prophetic model of spiritual companionship.

Her temperament, described by biographers as gentle and composed, harmonized well with the Prophet's (صلى الله عليه و آله وسلم) later life, which was increasingly oriented towards preparation for his final meeting with his Lord.

Maimunah (رضئ الله تعالى عنہا) was known for her worship and quiet service, qualities that defined her life within the Prophet's (صلى الله عليه و آله وسلم) home. Although she did not narrate a large number of hadith, the few that are transmitted from her convey important legal and devotional matters. Among them is a notable narration preserved in Sahih Muslim, in which she describes the Prophet's (صلى الله عليه و آله وسلم) practice of ritual purification (ghusl)—a testament to the trust he placed in her and the reliability of her memory. These narrations, while few in number, contribute to our understanding of the Prophet's (صلى الله عليه و آله وسلم) intimate life, and underscore her importance as a source of legal and ethical tradition.

Her house, located near the mosque of the Prophet (صلى الله عليه و آله وسلم) in Madinah, was modest in every respect. Like the other Mothers of the Believers, she received occasional gifts or stipends from the public treasury during the caliphates that followed, but she lived with humility and simplicity, never seeking prominence or material indulgence. Her commitment to the Prophet صلى (الله عليه و آله وسلم) was not marked by competition with the other wives, but by a quiet steadfastness and inner contentment.

One of the unique aspects of her life was her extended family's deep entwinement with the Islamic movement. Her sister Umm al-Faḍl (Lubabah) was the wife of Abbas ibn Abd al-Muṭṭalib (رضئ الله تعالى عنه), and her nephew was none other than Abdullah ibn Abbas (رضي الله تعالى عنهما), the great exegete of the Quran and Companion. Through this lineage, Maimunah (رضئ الله تعالى عنہا) remained closely tied to both the intellectual and familial legacy of the Prophet (صلى الله عليه و آله وسلم). She was revered not only as a wife of the Prophet (صلى الله عليه و آله وسلم) but also as an elder matriarch of one of the most influential Quraishi families in early Islam.

Though her public voice is not often recorded, her presence was a source of spiritual and social cohesion. She bore no children from the Prophet (صلى الله عليه و آله وسلم), but she fulfilled her role as a Mother of the Believers in the deepest sense—through guidance, remembrance, and unwavering loyalty.

Her marriage to the Prophet (صلى الله عليه و آله وسلم), occurring late in his life, symbolized a culmination—not only of his personal relationships, but also of his peacemaking efforts among the Quraish. Through Maimunah (رضئ الله تعالى عنہا), the Prophet (صلى الله عليه و آله وسلم) reinforced the bonds of kinship and alliance, offering dignity and inclusion to those who had once stood in opposition to him.

She remained his wife until his passing and continued to honor his memory in the years that followed, never remarrying, as was the decree of Allah for all the Mothers of the Believers. Her life after his death would reflect the same modesty and steadfastness that had defined her days in his company.

LATER LIFE AND DEATH

Following the passing of the Prophet Muhammad (صلى الله عليه و آله وسلم), Maimunah bint al-Ḥarith (رضئ الله تعالى عنہا), like the other noble wives of the Prophet (صلى الله عليه و آله وسلم), withdrew from the public eye and embraced a life of worship, remembrance, and quiet dignity. She had entered the Prophet's (صلى الله عليه و آله وسلم) life during its final phase, and after his death, she carried the weight of his memory with immense grace and loyalty. As one of the Mothers of the Believers, she was venerated not only for her role as his wife but also for her status as a guardian of his household legacy.

Maimunah (رضئ الله تعالى عنہا) continued to reside in Madinah, the city of light, where she was loved and respected by the community of the Companions and the Tabiʿeen (the generation that followed). Though she did not involve herself in legal discourse or political matters, her presence was revered. She was regarded as one of the last living links to the Prophet (صلى الله عليه و آله وسلم) himself, and her home, like those of the other wives, was considered a space of both historical sanctity and moral instruction.

As the Islamic state expanded and the caliphates of Abu Bakr, Umar, Uthman, and Ali (رضي تعالى عنهم الله) unfolded, Maimunah (رضئ الله تعالى عنہا) remained devoted to her private life, her acts of worship, and the memory of her beloved husband. She received a stipend from the Bayt al-Mal (public treasury), as was due to the Mothers of the Believers, but she lived with modesty, never displaying interest in the luxuries that became accessible during the later stages of Islamic expansion.

What set her apart even in her final years was her unwavering humility and her yearning to remain close to the Prophet (صلى الله عليه و آله وسلم) even in death. When she felt her end approaching, she expressed a simple and deeply poignant wish: to be buried in the same place where she had married the Prophet (صلى الله عليه و آله وسلم)—Sarif, a small valley just outside Makkah, along the road to Madinah. This was not only the site of her Nikaḥ, but also the beginning of the most honored chapter of her life.

Her wish was fulfilled. Maimunah (رضئ الله تعالى عنہا) passed away in the year 51 AH, during the rule of Muawiyah ibn Abu Sufyan (رضئ الله تعالى عنه), at the age of around 76. Her body was taken to Sarif, and she was buried there—in the same place where the Prophet (صلى الله عليه و آله وسلم) had first married her, a location forever sanctified by the memory of their union.

The historian Ibn Saʿd and Ibn Hajar al-Asqalani both affirm this account, and the site of her grave remains preserved to this day, marked by a sense of serene isolation, much like the woman herself—quiet, devoted, and noble.